

Cervical Cancer

Learn How It Affects Hispanic/Latina Women and How It Can Be Prevented



About Cancer ...

What Is Cancer?

- Cancer is a group of diseases that have to do with the overgrowth of cells.
- Cancer happens when cells in a certain part or parts of the body stop dying in a normal way.

Cells are the small units that make up living things, including the human body.

A person's body is made up of billions of cells.

When cells grow old or become damaged, they normally die and are replaced with new ones.

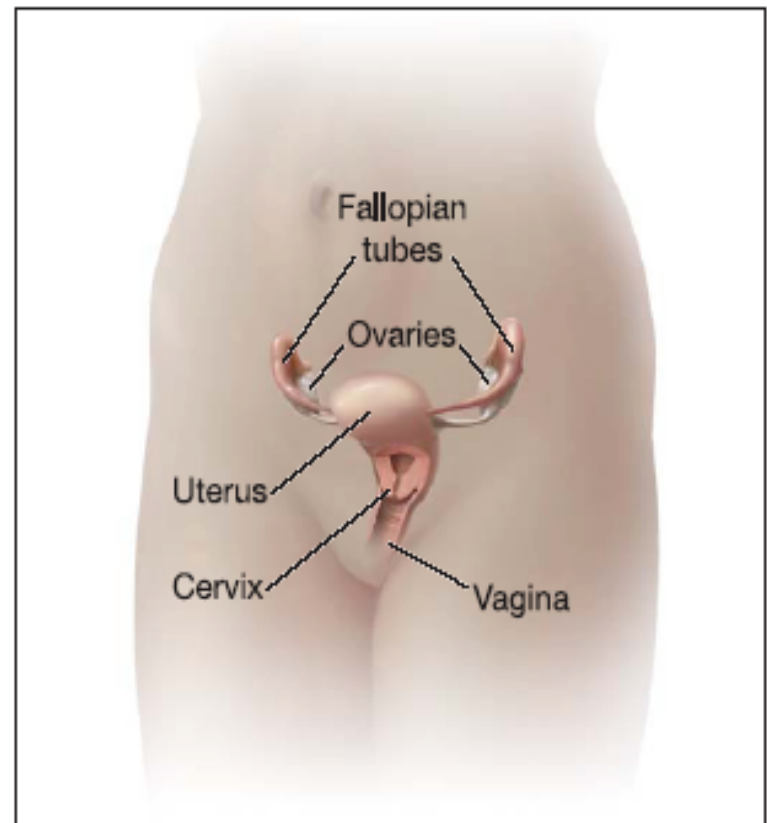
What Causes Cancer?

- **Not all causes of cancer are known. But scientists have been able to find many of them.**
- **For example, cancer may be caused by certain:**
 - Genetic factors
 - Lifestyle factors
 - Smoking
 - Sun exposure
 - Chemicals
 - Such as asbestos in the environment
 - Viruses & bacteria

About Cervical Cancer ...

What is Cervical Cancer?

- Cancer can happen in almost any part of the body.
- One of the parts of the body where cancer can develop is in a woman's cervix.



This image shows a woman's reproductive organs.

How Common Is Cervical Cancer?

- **Every year in the United States, about ...**
 - 10,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer.
 - 4,000 women die from cervical cancer.

How Does It Affect Hispanic/Latina Women?

- **Each year about 2,000 Hispanic/Latina women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer.**
- **A large percentage of Hispanic/Latina women are diagnosed at an advanced stage of cervical cancer and this number increases with age.**

What Causes Cervical Cancer?

- **The main cause of cervical cancer is a virus.**
- **This virus is called HPV (human papillomavirus).**

What is HPV?

- **HPV is a virus spread through sexual contact.**
 - HPV can be spread from one person to another even when a condom is used.

What is HPV?

- **HPV is a common virus in women and men.**
 - HPV usually has no symptoms, so a person may be infected with HPV and not know it.

What is HPV?

- **HPV infections can lead to cervical cancer.**
 - Most HPV infections go away on their own. But when HPV stays in the body, it can cause abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix that, over many years, could turn into cancer.

How Can Cervical Cancer be Prevented?

- **Abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix can be detected early, before they turn into cancer.**
 - This can be done with a Pap test.

How Can Cervical Cancer be Prevented?

- **Getting a Pap test on a regular basis can help women prevent cervical cancer.**
- **A Pap test can also detect cervical cancer early, increasing the chance of survival.**

Research Shows

- **Most cases of cervical cancer occur in women who:**
 - Have never had a Pap test.
 - Have not had a Pap test within the past 5 years.

What Is a Pap Test?

- **The Pap test is a simple, fast, and routine procedure.**
- **Doctors and other specially trained health care professionals, such as nurses, may perform Pap tests.**

What Is a Pap Test?

- **It is done during a pelvic exam, but it is not the same.**
 - In a pelvic exam, the doctor feels a woman's reproductive organs to find out if there is something abnormal in their shape or size.
 - To do the Pap test, the doctor uses a small brush to take a sample of cells from the cervix.

What Is a Pap Test?

- **The doctor then sends the sample to a laboratory to find out if there are abnormal cell changes that may lead to cancer or that may already be cancer.**

Pap Test Results

- **If precancerous changes are found ...**
 - They can be treated before they turn into cancer.
- **If cancer is found ...**
 - It can be treated early, increasing the chance for survival.

More About the Pap Test

- **It is important to remember that even when the results of the Pap test show abnormal findings, it does not usually mean that the woman has cancer.**
- **Most abnormal findings require only follow-up or minor treatment.**
- **A woman should talk to her doctor about her Pap test result and what the result means.**

More About the Pap Test

- **About 55 million Pap tests are performed each year in the United States.**
- **Of these, about 3.5 million (6%) are abnormal and require medical follow-up.**

When Should Women Get a Pap Test?

- **Women should have their first Pap test:**
 - About 3 years after beginning to have sex.
 - No later than age 21, even if they are not having sex.

When Should Women Get a Pap Test?

- **Women should then continue to get a Pap test:**
 - At least once every 3 years.
 - Some women may need to get tested more often. This will depend on the result of previous Pap tests.
 - Women aged 65 and older should talk to their doctors about whether they need to continue getting Pap tests.

Where Can Women Get a Pap Test?

- **Women can get a Pap test at the:**
 - Doctor's Office
 - Clinic or Community Health Center
 - Local Health Department
- **To find out where they can get a free or low-cost Pap test, women can call the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service at:**
 - 1-800-4-CANCER

Pap Testing Among Hispanic/Latina Women

- While most Hispanic/Latina women get a Pap test at some time during their lifetime ...
 - Many do not get tested on a regular basis.

Pap Testing Among Hispanic/Latina Women

- **In a year 2000 national survey ...**
 - 76.5% of Hispanic/Latina women (ages 18 and over) reported that they had had a Pap test within the last 3 years
 - Compared to 82.5% of white women and 84.2% of black women.

Barriers to Pap Tests Among Hispanic/Latina Women

- **Lack of knowledge about cervical cancer and the benefit of the Pap test**
- **Embarrassment**
- **Fear**
- **Discomfort**
- **Cost/lack of health insurance**
- **Lack of regular care or health care provider**
- **Lack of transportation**

Scenario #1



I take care of myself and I feel great. Why do I need a Pap test?

Scenario #1



Although you may feel healthy, the abnormal changes that can end up as cancer can appear without any symptoms. This can happen even when you are feeling great. That is why it is important to get regular Pap tests.

Scenario #2



After a Pap test, is a woman still a virgin?

Scenario #2



Many woman who have not had sex yet want to know if they are still virgins after having a Pap test. The Pap test can be done without affecting virginity. To lessen discomfort, you can ask your doctor to use the smallest speculum.

Scenario #3



I often feel embarrassed to talk about my body and other private issues.

Scenario #3



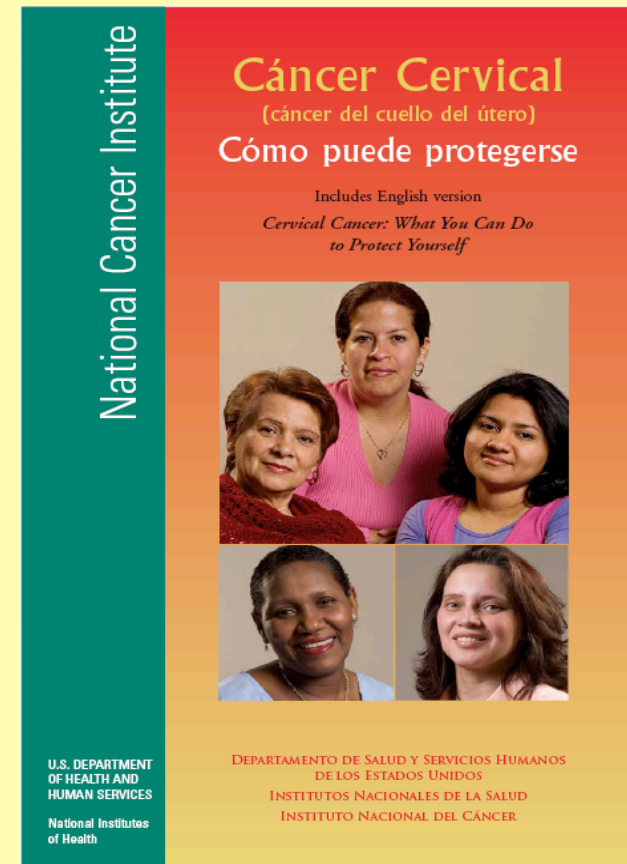
Because of our culture, we are not used to talking about sex and intimate parts of the body. But remember, your doctor is used to discussing these sensitive issues every day and wants to help you. Even if you feel embarrassed, remember that this test is important for your health.

Remember:

- **When women get a Pap test on a regular basis they can ...**
 - Prevent cervical cancer.
 - Detect cervical cancer early and increase their chances of being cured.

For More Information

- The National Cancer Institute has published a new booklet to inform Hispanic/Latina women about cervical cancer and the importance of getting a Pap test on a regular basis.



For More Information

- **To order free copies by phone:**
 - 1-800-4-CANCER
(1-800-422-6237)
 - You can choose to speak to a representative in Spanish.
- **Online:**
 - <http://www.cancer.gov>

